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RESOLUTIONS
OF
K. Sanders.
THE SOCIETY of the Friends of the
People
ASSOCIATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING
A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Д. С. ДУБА УИЛТИМ. А. Т. Т. А.

REGISTERED AND PATENTED IN THE UNITED STATES

THE SOCIETY

OF

REGISTERED PATENTS

Freemasons Tavern, 26th April, 1792.

AT a General Meeting of the Society established on the 11th instant, under the Title of

THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE,

ASSOCIATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING

A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM,

WILLIAM HENRY LAMBTON, ESQ. IN THE CHAIR,

RECEIVED a Report from the Committee appointed by the Resolution of the 19th instant, consisting of the following persons :

William Baker, Esq. M. P. Chairman,

Charles Grey, Esq. M. P.

Samuel Whitbread, Jun. Esq. M. P.

John Wharton, Esq. M. P.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq. M. P.

Philip Francis, Esq. M. P.

Hon. Thomas Maitland, M. P.

William Henry Lambton, Esq. M. P.

George Rous, Esq.

John Godfrey, Esq.

William Cunningham, Esq.

James Mackintosh, Esq.

Read a Draught of an Address to the People of Great Britain, contained in the Report of the Committee.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the said Address is approved of and adopted by this Meeting.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Declaration already agreed on, together with the said Address, be printed and published with the names of the subscribing members, and that the Committee be instructed to print and publish the same.

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DECLARATION.

DECLARATION.

“ NUMBER OF PERSONS having seriously reviewed and considered
 “ **A** the actual situation of public affairs, and state of the kingdom, and
 “ having communicated to each other their opinions on these subjects, have
 “ agreed and determined to institute a Society for the purpose of proposing to
 “ Parliament and to the Country, and of promoting, to the utmost of their
 “ power, the following Constitutional Objects, making the preservation of the
 “ Constitution, on its true principles, the foundation of all their proceedings.

First.—“ To restore the Freedom of Election, and a more equal Representation of the People in Parliament.

Secondly.—“ To secure to the People a more frequent Exercise of their Right of electing their Representatives.

“ The persons, who have signed their names to this agreement, think that these
 “ two fundamental measures will furnish the power and the means of correcting
 “ the abuses, which appear to them to have arisen from a neglect of the acknowledged Principles of the Constitution, and of accomplishing those subordinate
 “ Objects of Reform, which they deem to be essential to the Liberties of the
 “ People, and to the good Government of the Kingdom.”

SIGNED BY

Charles Grey, Esq. M. P.	Philip Francis, Esq. M. P.
Hon. Thomas Maidland, M. P.	Charles Coring, Esq.
George Rous, Esq.	John Hurford Stone, Esq.
William Cuninghame, Esq.	W. H. Lambton, Esq. M. P.
John Tweddell, Esq.	John Godfrey, Esq.
Earl of Lauderdale	George Tierney, Esq.
Nicolls Raynsford, Esq.	Arthur Piggot, Esq.
James Mackintosh, Esq.	J. B. Church, Esq. M. P.
Thomas Christie, Esq.	Gilbert Ironside, Esq.
Malcolm Laing, Esq.	T. B. Hollis, Esq.
Right Hon. Lord Kinnaird	William Baker, Esq. M. P.
James Archdekin, Esq.	Samuel Whitbread, jun. Esq. M. P.
William Harwood, Esq.	Dudley North, Esq. M. P.
David Godfrey, Esq.	Sir John Throckmorton, Bart.
Higgins Eden, Esq.	John Courtenay, Esq. M. P.

M. A. Taylor,

M. A. Taylor, Esq. M. P.	Henry Howard, Esq. M. P.
William Breton, Esq.	John Leach, Esq.
Thomas Rogers, Esq.	John Nicholls, Esq.
Hon. Thomas Erskine, M. P.	Joseph Richardson, Esq.
R. Knight, Esq.	John Towgood, Esq.
Thomas Thompson, Esq. M. P.	William Chisholm, Esq.
Colonel Tarleton, M. P.	John Fazakerly, Esq.
H. Howorth, Esq.	Richard S. Milnes, Esq. M. P.
Mr. Serjeant Bond.	Samuel Shore, Esq.
William Lushington, Esq.	Samuel Shore, jun. Esq.
Right Hon. Lord John Russell, M. P.	Charles Warren, Esq.
Samuel Rogers, Esq.	Long Kingsman, Esq.
T. C. Curwen, Esq. M. P.	Edward Jer. Curteis, Esq.
Peregrine Dealtry, Esq.	Samuel Long, Esq. M. P.
Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq. M. P.	Henry Swann, Esq.
William Fullarton, Esq.	T. B. Rous, Esq.
Norman Macleod, Esq. M. P.	D. O'Bryen, Esq.
James Losh, Esq.	J. Lodge Barley, Esq.
John Sawbridge, Esq. Ald. M. P.	James West, Esq.
Richard Weld, Esq.	Richard Carpenter Smith, Esq.
John Claridge, Esq.	W. Powlett Powlett, Esq. M. P.
John Wharton, Esq. M. P.	George Livius, Esq.
James Martin, Esq. M. P.	Right Hon. Lord Daer.
William Smith, Esq. M. P.	Hon. John Douglas.
John Scott, Esq. M. P.	Right Hon. Lord Edward Fitzgerald.
Sir Bellingham Graham, Bart.	Rev. Dr. Kippis.
George Byng, Esq. M. P.	James Jacque, Esq.
John Cartwright, Esq.	Francis Love Beckford, Esq.
Jer. Batley, Esq.	Adam Walker, Esq.
Ralph Carr, jun. Esq.	Richard Sharp, Esq.
Ralph Milbanke, Esq. M. P.	Rev. Dr. Joseph Towers.
Henry Howard, Esq.	John Clerk, Esq.
Sir J. W. S. Gardiner, Bart.	Thomas Bell, Esq.
B. E. Howard, Esq.	John Wilson, Esq.
E. B. Clive, Esq.	Andrew Stirling, Esq.

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

NO man, who is not ready to express his concurrence in our principles, by signing the Declaration, can be admitted into our Society. The objects of it, as we conceive, are of a nature at all times fit to be pursued and recommended to the country. At different periods they have heretofore been avowed and supported by the highest authorities in this kingdom; by eminent individuals, and considerable bodies of men; by Mr. Locke and Judge Blackstone; by the late Earl of Chatham, and Sir George Savile; by the Duke of Richmond, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Fox; by petitions from several counties, and by repeated declarations from the city of London.

In appealing to the avowed opinions of men of established reputation, or of distinguished rank in their country, we do not mean to strengthen the reason, or enforce the necessity of the measure we propose, so much as to obviate all personal imputations, which the enemies of the cause will be ready to throw upon those who support it. It is not that, on our own account, we dread the effect or regard the impression, which such imputations may produce. But we think it material to the credit and success of our proceedings to shew, that we are not aiming at *Reforms unthought of by wise and virtuous men*: that our opinions neither possess the advantage, nor are liable to the objection of novelty; and that we cannot be accused or suspected of factious purposes, or dangerous designs, without extending the same accusation or suspicion to the motives of men, whose situation and property, independent of their character, principles, and abilities, have given them a most important stake in the peace and good government of the kingdom.

Convinced by our own reflections, by experience, and by authority, that the thing we propose to do, is fit to be done, we have, with equal deliberation, weighed the reasons that may recommend, or be objected to the present time, as the most or least proper for bringing it forward. On this point, we have no address to make to the determined enemies of a Reform of every kind. Their objection, whether valid or not, is to the substance of the measure, and cannot be abated by *circumstances*. To those, who concur generally in the principle, but who may be inclined by particular reasons to defer the attempt, we seriously wish to submit the following considerations:—That admitting this to be a season of

general

general tranquillity in the country, it is, on that account, the more proper for temperate reflection, and prudent exertions to accomplish any necessary improvement;—it is the time when practical measures for that purpose are most likely to be adopted with discretion and pursued with moderation. If we are persuaded to wait for other times, of a different complexion, for times of public complaint, or general discontent, we shall then be told, that general remedies are not fit to be proposed in the moment of particular disorder, and that it is our duty to wait for the return of quiet days, unless we mean to create or increase confusion in the country. The result of this dilemma, if it be suffered to prevail, is pure and absolute inactivity at present, and for ever. On the other hand, if it be true, as we are convinced it is, that, in this general appearance of tranquillity, there is some mixture of discontent, as well as of strong and well grounded opinion, on the subject of abuses in the Government, and corruptions of the Constitution, we wish it to be considered by men, whose judgement has been formed or enlightened by experience, and whose actions are most likely to be directed by prudence, whether, in taking proper measures to remove the cause and objects of such discontent and opinion, the choice of the time be not a material part of the measure; and whether the earliest time, that can be taken, for preventing the encrease of an existing evil, be not the safest and the best?

The example and situation of another kingdom, are held out to deter us from innovations of any kind. We say, that the Reforms we have in view, are not innovations. Our intention is, not to change, but to restore; not to displace, but to re-instate the Constitution upon its true principles and original ground. In the conduct of persons most likely to reproach us with a spirit of innovation, we see a solid ground for retorting the imputation. Their professions of admiration of the beauty and of zeal for the security of the Constitution, appear to us too lavish to be sincere, especially when compared with those practical violations, with which they suffer this beautiful system to be invaded, and to which they never refuse to give their concurrence. They will not innovate, but they are no enemies to gradual decay; as if the changes insensibly produced by time, and nourished by neglect, were not in effect the most dangerous innovations. But what security have we, that the dispositions of such men are not something worse than passive? how are we assured that, in praising the Constitution, their intention is not to adorn a victim, which they wish to sacrifice, or to flatter the Beauty they are endeavouring to corrupt? Let their intention be what it may, we an-

swer their accusation in the words of one of the wisest of mankind : “ * THAT
 “ TIME IS THE GREATEST INNOVATOR; AND IF TIME OF
 “ COURSE ALTER THINGS TO THE WORSE, AND IF WISDOM
 “ AND COUNSEL SHALL NOT ALTER THEM TO THE BETTER,
 “ WHAT SHALL BE THE END ? ”

By the Reform proposed by Lord Chatham †, he declared in the House of Lords, that he meant to *infuse a portion of new health into the Constitution*. The Duke of Richmond has declared §, “ that “ his reasons in favour of a Parliamentary Reform were formed on the experience of twenty-six years, which, whether in “ or out of Government, had equally convinced him, *that the restoration of a genuine House of Commons, by a renovation of the Rights of the People, was the only remedy against that system of corruption, which had brought the nation to disgrace and poverty, and threatened it with the loss of liberty.* ”

Other authorities, in favour of a Parliamentary Reform, as direct and explicit as these, might be quoted in abundance. The public is possessed of them. We rather wish to encounter, because we are sure we can efface, in every rational mind, the impression, which may have been made by a view of those events, which have attended a total change in the Constitution of France. WE DENY THE EXISTENCE OF ANY RESEMBLANCE WHATEVER BETWEEN THE CASES OF THE TWO KINGDOMS; AND WE UTTERLY DISCLAIM THE NECESSITY OF RESORTING TO SIMILAR REMEDIES. We do not believe that, at this day, an absolute avowed despotism, in the hands of the executive power, would be endured in this country. But who can say, to what conclusion the silent unresisted operation of abuses, incessantly acting and constantly increasing, may lead us hereafter ; what habits it may gradually create ; what power it may finally establish ? The abuses in the government of France were suffered to gather and accumulate, until nothing but an eruption could put an end to them. The discontent of the people was converted into despair. Preventive remedies were either not thought of in time, or were not proposed until it was too late to apply them with effect. The subversion of the ancient government ensued. The inference from this comparison is at once so powerful and so obvious, that we know not by what argument to illustrate or enforce it. We mean to avert for ever from our country the calamities inseparable from such convulsions. If there be, as it is said, in any part of this kingdom, a dispo-

* Lord Bacon.

† 1 Geo. 2^d, 1710.

§ Jan. 17, 1783.

sition to promote confusion, or even to arrive at improvement by unconstitutional and irregular courses, we hold ourselves as strictly pledged to resist that disposition, wherever it may appear, as to pursue our own objects by unexceptionable methods. If, on the contrary, it be true, that the mass of the people are satisfied with the present state of things, or indifferent about it; if they approve of the representation as it stands, the form of election, and the duration of the trust; or if, condemning these things, they are determined, from indolence or despair, not to attempt to correct them; then indeed the efforts of individuals may be ineffectual, but they cannot be injurious to the peace of the community. If the spirit of the Constitution be dead in the hearts of the people, no human industry can revive it. To affirm, that extensive mischief may be done by a statement of facts or arguments, which make no general impression on the public mind, is a proposition that contradicts itself, and requires no other refutation. We trust it will be proved by experiment, that these inconsistent assertions are equally unfounded, and that the people of this country are no more disposed to submit to abuses without complaint, than to look for redress in any proceedings repugnant to the laws, or unwarranted by the constitution. Between anarchy and despotism, speaking for ourselves, we have no choice to make;—we have no preference to give. We neither admit the necessity, nor can we endure the idea of resorting to either of these extremities as a refuge from the other. The course we are determined to pursue, is equally distant from both.

Finally, we assert, that it must be blindness not to see, and treachery not to acknowledge,

That “**the instruments of power are not perhaps so open and avowed as they formerly were, and therefore are the less liable to jealous and invidious reflections; but they are not the weaker upon that account. In short, our national debts and taxes have, in their natural consequences, thrown such a weight of power into the executive scale of government, as we cannot think was intended by our patriot ancestors, who gloriously struggled for the abolition of the then formidable parts of the prerogative, and by an unaccountable want of foresight, established this system in their stead.*”—Our general object is to recover and preserve the true balance of the Constitution.

THESE ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR ASSOCIATION, and, on our steady adherence to them, we look with a just confidence to the approbation and support of the people in the prosecution of our object. A measure, so likely to be opposed by the united strength of various interests, can never succeed, but by the declared and hearty concurrence of the nation.

• Blackstone.

RESOLVED

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That a motion be made in the House of Commons, at an early period in the next session of Parliament, for introducing a Parliamentary Reform.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That Charles Grey, Esq. be requested to make, and the Hon. Thomas Erskine to second, the above motion.

Signed, by the unanimous order of the Meeting,

W. H. LAMBTON, Chairman.